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Cape Lookout National Seashore News Release

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Shackleford Banks Horses 2011 Findings Report

Harkers Island, NC -- Federal legislation, passed in 1998, protects the wild horses within Cape Lookout National Seashore and requires an annual report on the status of the herd. This report covers the period from April 2011 through March 2012. The National Park Service and the Foundation for Shackleford Horses, Inc. cooperatively manage the horses, pursuant to the legislation and a Memorandum of Understanding updated in 2007.

There are 109 horses on Shackleford Banks. The population is generally managed between 110 and 130 horses but birth rate was lower and mortality higher than average/anticipated/expected. No contraception or removal of extra horses has occurred since 2009. This is the second year in a row that birth control has not been needed. The Foundation does have horses available for adoption.

Six foals were born in 2011 and one was born in January of 2012. Most reproduction and birth occurs during the spring and summer months when nutrients are most readily available, but, as with any bell-shaped curve, there are outliers like the January filly. One 2011 foal died within a week of birth of unknown causes and another was removed at 6 months of age when his dam was unable to provide sufficient nutrients for him to survive in the wild.

Adult mortality was above average with one under five, five in their teens and two in their twenties dying during this period.

Six mares tested pregnant for 2011; if they foal they should do so before the end of June. The pregnancy tests, because of their timing, do not show mares who might foal in July or later. Summer foals are likely.

For further information, contact Dr. Sue Stuska, Wildlife Biologist – Horses, at Cape Lookout National Seashore, (252) 728-2250, ext. 3017, or Carolyn S. Mason, Chairman and President, Foundation for Shackleford Horses, Inc., (252) 728-6308. For horse adoption information, contact Anita Kimball at (252) 241-5222 or Joy Lawrence, evenings, at (252) 728-7111.

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